United Nations

A/53/PV.92

General Assembly

Fifty-third Session

Official Records

92nd plenary meeting
Thursday, 17 December 1998, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Opertti ..... (Uruguay)

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Agenda item 30 (*continued*)

United Nations reform: measures and proposals

Draft resolution (A/53/L.73)

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I should now like to consult the Assembly with a view to considering immediately draft resolution A/53/L.73.

In this connection, since document A/53/L.73 has only been circulated this morning, it would be necessary to waive the relevant provision of rule 78 of the Assembly's rules of procedure, which reads as follows:

> "As a general rule, no proposal shall be discussed or put to the vote at any meeting of the General Assembly unless copies of it have been circulated to all delegations not later than the day preceding the meeting."

Unless I hear any objections, I shall take it that the Assembly agrees to consider draft resolution A/53/L.73.

It was so decided.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/53/L.73.

As there are no speakers on the list, the Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/53/L.73, entitled "The Millennium Assembly of the United Nations".

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/53/L.73?

Draft resolution A/53/L.73 was adopted (resolution 53/202).

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I call on the representative of the United States of America.

Ms. Montoya (United States of America): While we are considering agenda item 30 today, I would like to make clear my delegation's deep disappointment and grave concern that the General Assembly has thus far failed to address its responsibilities, as set out in the report to the Secretary-General by the United Nations Task Force on Environment and Human Settlements. Our delegation believes that we have a duty to work with our partners here in the General Assembly to assist and support reform efforts to be undertaken by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Commission on Human Settlements. Full consideration of this agenda item cannot be delayed. As such, we would like to join our partners in regular and transparent consultations aimed at moving the reform process

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forward. My delegation strongly believes that a failure to do so, or to adopt a decision calling for the same in this body, would unnecessarily delay reform efforts undertaken by UNEP and the Commission, which would be to the grave detriment of their continuing operation.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): In connection with the report of the Secretary-General on environment and human settlements contained in document A/53/463 and issued under item 30, I should like to assure members that the General Assembly will continue its consideration of the report in a fully open and transparent manner early next year.

We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 30.

Agenda item 3 (*continued*)

Credentials of representatives to the fifty-third session of the General Assembly

(b) Second report of the Credentials Committee (A/53/556/Add.1)

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): The draft resolution recommended by the Credentials Committee in paragraph 11 of its report reads as follows:

"*The General Assembly,*

"*Having considered* the second report of the Credentials Committee and the recommendation contained therein,

"*Approves* the second report of the Credentials Committee."

We shall now take action on the recommendation of the Credentials Committee set forth in paragraph 11 of the second report.

The Credentials Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 53/23 C).

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 3.

Agenda item 12 (*continued*)

Report of the Economic and Social Council (A/53/3)

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): Members will recall that chapters I to VII and sections A to C of chapter VIII, and chapters IX and X of the report of the Economic and Social Council were assigned for consideration directly in plenary meeting.

May I take it that the Assembly wishes to take note of chapters I to VII and sections A to C of chapter VIII, and chapters IX and X of the report of the Economic and Social Council?

It was so decided.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 12?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 20 (*continued*)

Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance

(b) Special economic assistance to individual countries or regions

Draft resolution (A/53/L.72)

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Senegal to introduce draft resolution A/53/L.72.

Mr. Ka (Senegal) (*interpretation from French*): I should like, on behalf of the Group of African States, to introduce draft resolution A/53/L.72 on emergency assistance to the Sudan under item 20 (b) of the agenda of the General Assembly.

The African Group, meeting in plenary, decided to submit this draft resolution, which is one of the group of resolutions dealing with humanitarian situations in Africa.

The draft resolution, while noting with appreciation the increased contributions for 1998 in response to the inter-agency appeal for the Sudan, emphasizes the considerable relief needs that remain to be addressed, in

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particular in the area of food and of the fight against various illnesses and epidemics.

The draft resolution draws attention to the disastrous consequences of the floods that occurred in various parts of the country in 1998. While calling for an early resolution to the conflict in order to put an end to the suffering of the civilian population, the draft resolution reaffirms the need for all parties to continue to facilitate the work of humanitarian organizations in the supply of food and medicines to affected peoples in remote areas.

The draft resolution acknowledges with appreciation the cooperation of the Government of the Sudan with the United Nations with a view to facilitating relief operations in the affected areas, and it encourages the continuation of that cooperation. The General Assembly also expresses its appreciation to the donor community, United Nations agencies and governmental and non-governmental organizations for their past and future contributions to the humanitarian needs of the Sudan.

While recognizing the need for neutrality and impartiality in humanitarian activities, the draft resolution stresses that Operation Lifeline Sudan should operate within the principle of national sovereignty and the framework of international cooperation in accordance with the provisions of international law. The draft resolution also calls upon the donor community and the agencies of the United Nations system to provide financial, medical and technical assistance and substantially to increase, to the extent possible, such assistance to combat diseases and epidemics in the Sudan.

The draft resolution stresses the imperative of ensuring the safety of humanitarian personnel as well as the need for access to remote areas in order to provide relief to all affected populations, while observing the principles and guidelines of Operation Lifeline Sudan and of international humanitarian law.

Finally, the draft resolution welcomes the signing by the Government of the Sudan of the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Landmines and on Their Destruction, and urges all parties to the conflict to desist from using them. It also calls on the international community to refrain from supplying mines to parties in conflict in the region and to make every effort to provide the necessary demining assistance to the Sudan.

I have the pleasure of informing the Assembly that this draft resolution is the result of intensive and painstaking consultations with the donor countries under the chairmanship of Ambassador Jørgen Bøjer, Permanent Representative of Denmark and coordinator of humanitarian resolutions under agenda item 20, and I thank him on behalf of the Group of African States and in particular on behalf of the Sudan.

This text was agreed upon by all the delegations providing humanitarian assistance to the Sudan, in particular the countries of the European Union, the United States, Canada, Norway, Australia and Japan. I should like, on behalf of the African Group, to thank all of those countries for their constructive contribution to the drafting of this text, which, I hope, will be adopted by the Assembly by consensus.

In so doing, the Assembly will demonstrate once again its support for and its solidarity with the Sudan, which is currently affected by a very alarming humanitarian situation.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I should now like to consult the Assembly with a view to considering immediately draft resolution A/53/L.72. In this connection, since document A/53/L.72 has been circulated only this morning, it would be necessary to waive the relevant provision of rule 78 of the rules of procedure, which reads as follows:

> "As a general rule, no proposal shall be discussed or put to the vote at any meeting of the General Assembly unless copies of it have been circulated to all delegations not later than the day preceding the meeting."

If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Assembly agrees to consider draft resolution A/53/L.72.

It was so decided.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/53/L.72, entitled "Emergency assistance to the Sudan".

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/53/L.72?

Draft resolution A/53/L.72 was adopted (resolution 53/10).

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in explanation of position on the resolution just adopted.

Ms. Montoya (United States of America): My delegation joins consensus on the resolution concerning humanitarian assistance to the Sudan because of the need to ensure that the international community is sufficiently seized with the humanitarian tragedy affecting that country. We continue to have concerns about the Government of the Sudan's cooperation in facilitating the delivery of relief assistance.

The United States recalls that Sudan's denial of flight clearances to Bahr-el-Ghazal in February through April of this year contributed to the devastating famine that placed 2.5 million Sudanese at risk of starvation. We urge the Government of Sudan to ensure this does not happen again. We call on Khartoum to fulfil its commitment at the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) peace talks in May to provide free and unhindered access for the delivery of humanitarian supplies, as called for in the resolution adopted today.

In specific terms, that includes the following: granting clearances for all relief flights on a timely basis or explaining clearly why any have been refused; providing access for a United Nations assessment team to the Nuba Mountains — then-Foreign Minister Taha agreed to do so in a meeting with Secretary-General Annan in May 1998, and Khartoum reaffirmed that offer at the August peace talks, yet that commitment remains unfulfilled; fulfilling its commitment to provide ten thousand metric tons of food commodities to the relief effort, particularly given the fact that Sudan exports one million tons of sorghum annually; simplifying the monthly procedure for relief flights, making it easier for relief workers to travel to affected areas, and instituting a clear policy on communications equipment for humanitarian personnel.

We also urge the Government of the Sudan to implement fully the agreements signed with the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) in Rome in mid-November, providing for increased security for relief workers and providing a framework for increased use of rail corridors and cross-line food deliveries.

The situation in southern Sudan is one of the world's most devastating humanitarian tragedies. The resolution adopted today can help lead to an improvement of that situation, provided the Government of Sudan takes significant and concrete steps towards facilitating the delivery of humanitarian assistance to all those who need it.

Finally, the United States delegation would like to recognize the extraordinary efforts of the Permanent Representative of Denmark, Ambassador Jørgen Bøjer, in guiding us to the carefully negotiated consensus on this resolution.

Mr. Manz (Austria): The European Union appreciates that it was possible to adopt the resolution "Emergency assistance to the Sudan" without a vote, thereby discontinuing a pattern of disagreement on resolutions on this subject over recent years.

The European Union considers that the text before us is a marked improvement with regard to previous years. It takes the situation on the ground into consideration and reflects agreements on international humanitarian law and principles. The European Union hopes that the consensus reached will have a positive impact on the work of Operation Lifeline Sudan and of other international humanitarian organizations in the Sudan, and on the efforts of all parties to the conflict to achieve a lasting peaceful solution. In this context, the European Union calls for an early resolution of the conflict and expresses grave concern about the threat to and suffering of the civilian population, which undermines the effectiveness of international, regional and national humanitarian assistance.

The European Union attaches particular importance to the emphasis in the resolution on the need for Operation Lifeline Sudan to be operated and managed with a view to ensuring its efficiency, transparency and effectiveness. We also welcome the reference in the resolution to the role of the Emergency Relief Coordinator and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in strengthening the coordination of Operation Lifeline Sudan. While acknowledging the progress made in this respect in some areas, we expect to see further improvements in the management and operation of Operation Lifeline Sudan in the months ahead.

The European Union was working intensively to achieve a consensus on this resolution and thanks all negotiating partners for the spirit of cooperation shown during negotiations. I want to thank, in particular, Ambassador Jørgen Bøjer of Denmark, who has coordinated all resolutions under this item and has put

considerable time and effort into finding an agreement on this resolution.

Ms. McVey (Canada): Canada is pleased that after two years the resolution on emergency assistance to the Sudan has been adopted by consensus.

In any negotiation there is a process of give and take, of compromise and agreement, and this is understood by all delegations. It is the position of the delegation of Canada that any change in the management of Operation Lifeline Sudan is subject to the concurrence of all the signatories to the agreement establishing Operation Lifeline Sudan, and its management and operation should be conducted accordingly. Likewise, we believe that Operation Lifeline Sudan should be conducted in a non-political manner and in strict accordance with humanitarian principles. We note with satisfaction that this year's text makes solid reference to the importance of safe and unhindered access by humanitarian workers to all populations in need.

As Operation Lifeline Sudan constitutes the basic framework for humanitarian assistance to the Sudan, it is therefore paramount that all parties in the Sudan operate in accordance with the 1994 tripartite Agreements and that the principles and guidelines of Operation Lifeline Sudan, as well as the principles contained in the annex to General Assembly resolution 46/182, are duly respected by all parties to ensure the efficiency, effectiveness, transparency, impartiality and neutrality of the operation.

As in the past, Canada will continue to fully support the humanitarian work of Operation Lifeline Sudan. We have been encouraged by recent developments such as the October extension of the humanitarian ceasefire and the November signing of the security and transportation protocols by all parties in Rome. In this regard, we urge the Government of the Sudan to extend the ceasefire in terms of duration and of geographic boundaries to include the region of the Nuba mountains. In recognizing that the humanitarian situation in the Sudan is the result of the ongoing civil war, we urge all parties to the conflict to seek its early resolution.

We proffer our gratitude to the delegation of Denmark, and in particular to Ambassador Jørgen Bøjer for the very constructive role he played as facilitator in these negotiations.

It is the belief of my delegation that humanitarian assistance is most effective when national, regional and international efforts converge. Only through concerted action and international cooperation can the obstacles to the provision of humanitarian assistance to all populations in need be overcome.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote.

I know call on the representative of the Sudan.

Mr. Erwa (Sudan) (*interpretation from Arabic*): First, I would like to thank the Chairman of the African Group for the Group's submission of this draft resolution which he was kind enough to introduce on the Group's behalf.

I also would like to thank all the parties that succeeded in bringing this draft resolution to the Assembly by consensus, and all those who made efforts to that end.

My delegation also has cooperated in this area, and I would like here to reaffirm my country's complete commitment to the basic principles for the sake of which we attained this resolution relating to the humanitarian conditions in the Sudan.

We would also like to reaffirm our commitment to meet our obligations, to ensure all means of access to all regions and to allow all humanitarian assistance to reach all quarters of the Sudan.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): Resolution 53/10 having been adopted, I would like to say a special word of thanks to the coordinator of the consultations on agenda item 20. I am sure members will join me, on behalf of the General Assembly, in thanking Ambassador Jørgen Bøjer of Denmark, who undertook the long and arduous task of holding consultations and negotiations on the resolutions adopted under agenda item 20.

The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of sub-item (b) of agenda item 20.

Agenda item 58 (*continued*)

Strengthening of the United Nations system

Draft decision (A/53/L.68)

Draft resolution (A/53/L.74)

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): Before we proceed further, I should like to inform members that it is my understanding further consultations are needed regarding draft resolution A/53/L.74. Action on draft resolution A/53/L.74 will therefore be taken at a later date to be announced.

I now give the floor to the representative of Canada to introduce draft decision A/53/L.68.

Ms. McVey (Canada): It is an honour to present for the consideration of the Assembly the draft decision entitled "Non-governmental organizations", as contained in document A/53/L.68.

As requested in last year's decision 52/453 on this very same topic, the Secretary-General prepared a report on the arrangements and practices for the interaction of non-governmental organizations in all activities of the United Nations system. His report provided a much needed basis of pertinent information and analysis, as well as a good overview of existing institutional arrangements for the participation of non-governmental organizations in the United Nations system.

In considering next steps, my delegation endeavoured to consult as widely as possible with all interested parties, delegations and non-governmental organizations alike. It was generally agreed that the Secretary-General should be requested to solicit the views of States, members of specialized agencies, observers, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations from all regions on the broad range of aspects on the question of the participation of non-governmental organizations in the United Nations system, and subsequently to prepare a follow-up report to circulate to the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session.

This is the essential purpose of the draft decision before the Assembly. It would be my delegation's hope and expectation that the Secretary-General's follow-up report would equip the Assembly to consider concrete measures next year to enhance the cooperation between the United Nations and non-governmental organizations.

I wish to thank all our partners for their contributions and engagement in this issue. The collaboration and commitment expressed by all portend well for strengthened collaboration between the United Nations and non-governmental organizations from all parts of the world.

With these brief comments, I am honoured to commend the draft decision before us for the Assembly's adoption by consensus, as agreed during informal consultations.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): The Assembly will now take a decision on draft decision A/53/L.68, entitled "Non-governmental organizations".

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt the draft decision?

Draft decision A/53/L.68 was adopted.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 58.

Postponement of date of recess

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): Members will recall that at its 84th plenary meeting, on 9 December 1998, the General Assembly decided that the fifty-third session should recess on 17 December 1998.

However, as the Fifth Committee, despite its best efforts, has not been able to complete its work, the Assembly will not be able to conclude its work today, 17 December 1998. I should like, therefore, to propose to the Assembly that it postpone its date of recess until tomorrow, Friday, 18 December 1998.

If there is no objection, may I take it that the Assembly agrees to this proposal?

It was so decided.

Statement by the President

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): As this is the last meeting over which I will preside in 1998, before we continue our work next year, I should like to take this opportunity to make a statement in my capacity as President of the General Assembly. I do not wish to make a lengthy closing statement, but simply to offer a

review of sorts of some of the aspects of our work before we return to our countries and homes.

I think we can feel legitimate satisfaction about the work we have done. Both in the plenary meetings of the Assembly and in its Committees, the pace of our work has been very intense and has often demanded very long and tiring days of delegations. However, the results are gratifying.

The General Assembly had 168 items on its agenda, and up until 15 December had adopted 250 resolutions and 70 decisions during this first part of the fifty-third session, the content of many of which was politically significant. It would not be appropriate for us to evaluate our work at this point, but I would at least like to refer to some elements of the environment in which that work took place.

The first element is the ongoing dire financial situation of the United Nations, despite which the Organization nevertheless continues to survive and carry out its commitments. Unfortunately, this factor has not been a characteristic solely of this session. It has been dragging on for several years. Needless to say, this has a negative effect on the work and results of deliberations on several important issues. We hope that the most important States in arrears will soon make their required payments without conditions and that future sessions will not take place under the tyranny of financial limitations.

On the other hand, a great spirit of cooperation and compromise on the part of all delegations prevailed in our deliberations. Thanks to that spirit of cooperation, even controversial deliberations were carried out without serious problems. Although delegations put forward and defended their positions energetically and some tensions arose at times, there was always an effort to find consensus and reconciliation of opposing interests. Proof of this is the fact that there have been 190 adoptions by consensus to date at this session. For this I wish in particular to thank all delegations and congratulate them on that spirit of cooperation, which we hope will spread throughout the entire Organization.

Perhaps I can single out some of the resolutions adopted at this session as illustrations of the spirit of understanding and tolerance that seems to be progressively permeating the international community. I am speaking of resolution 53/22, on dialogue among civilizations. In adopting this resolution the General Assembly opened up another path towards strengthening understanding and solidarity among the peoples of the world.

Similarly, resolution 53/30, on the question of equitable representation on the Security Council, can also be taken as an example of how much can be achieved when there is genuine will to understand each other and to make reciprocal concessions through compromise. I need not point out the importance and extreme complexity of the issue of equitable representation on the Security Council. Of course, there was no expectation of making spectacular progress on the substance of this issue at this session. I do hope that progress can be made in that direction next year in the meetings of the Open-ended Working Group. But resolution 53/30, which was adopted by the General Assembly by consensus and whose importance is in inverse proportion to its brevity, will undoubtedly be a contributing element to establishing a climate of mutual confidence and thus promote the development of what I hope will be fruitful negotiations.

We should stress that the General Assembly has paid particular attention to questions of peace and security on the African continent.

With the adoption of the resolution on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa, the General Assembly not only confirmed the particular interest and concern of the entire international community about current problems in that region, but also tried to contribute effectively to improving this situation.

Unfortunately, this year nature demonstrated its violent side in many parts of the world. The General Assembly has responded to the best of its undoubtedly limited abilities, but in any case the resolutions it has adopted bear witness to the international community's very strong sense of solidarity, which has withstood all these disasters.

In the areas of disarmament and international security, interest was focused, quite naturally, on nuclear issues because of events that took place this year in this field. All are aware of this. Among the 48 resolutions adopted by the General Assembly on the recommendation of the First Committee, I wish to emphasize that condemning nuclear testing in South-East Asia, entitled "Towards a nuclear-weapon-free world: the need for a new agenda".

Once again this year, a resolution was also adopted that opens the way for the convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. The consensus adoption of this resolution showed the

world's readiness for such a session. We hope that any remaining reservations in this respect can be overcome and that the special session on disarmament can be held in the near future.

The number of resolutions adopted on the recommendation of the Second Committee rose to 35; all of these, except one on Palestine, were adopted by consensus. The dominant theme in the Second Committee was globalization. The high-level dialogue that took place in September on this issue undoubtedly contributed to a better understanding of this phenomenon, which seems to be emerging as the main issue for the international community on the eve of the twenty-first century. The resolution adopted in this regard recognizes the central role which the United Nations must play and the need for coordination between the United Nations, the Bretton Woods institutions and the international organizations. It highlights the growing acceptance of the fact that the United Nations is the appropriate forum in which to hold a dialogue on development issues, with an impact on the discussions that may take place in the Bretton Woods institutions. The dialogue between the intergovernmental bodies, the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions should continue, exploiting the experience of the high-level meeting of the Economic and Social Council that took place in April this year.

Another central issue was that of financing for development. Broad consensus has emerged on the need for genuine cooperation and collaboration in the process and on the urgency of achieving an agreement as soon as possible on the agenda of the Open-ended Working Group of the General Assembly on the high-level intergovernmental consideration of this issue.

In the field of cooperation on social, humanitarian and cultural affairs, 59 resolutions were adopted, most by consensus. Also in this area, concern was expressed about the current economic situation and its negative impact on social development. Several resolutions were adopted with respect to human rights. Among these, we would highlight the adoption of the Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and the resolution confirming commitments undertaken in the 1993 Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action. Another resolution that deserves mention is the one on international cooperation against the world drug problem.

In the area of special political and decolonization issues, 27 resolutions were adopted, 12 by consensus. In addition to the resolutions on the usual decolonization issues, the effects of atomic radiation, international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space and questions relating to information, resolutions were adopted on two hotly debated questions: the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and the question of Israeli practices in the occupied territories. The Organization's financial crisis and difficulties in completing the peace process were the aspects most stressed. The Wye River Memorandum brought a positive element to this process.

Nothing can be said with respect to administrative and budgetary affairs, since the deliberations have been extended. Of course, the issues addressed, such as the programme budget for the 2000-2001 biennium, the first programme of results for the 1998-1999 biennium, the scale of assessments and other matters eloquently illustrate the complexity of the Fifth Committee's work. Among the issues to be discussed next year are human resources, the development account, the reform of the budgeting system, internal oversight services and all issues related to peacekeeping operations and the United Nations procurement system.

The General Assembly adopted 13 resolutions on the recommendation of the Sixth Committee, among which we would highlight that on assistance to third States affected by the application of sanctions. Of particular importance was the adoption of a decision providing for the convening next year of three meetings of the Preparatory Commission for the establishment of the International Criminal Court. Equally important is the resolution confirming a number of principles of international law to be observed in the conduct of negotiations. Other resolutions were adopted on the United Nations Decade of International Law. In this area, the work on one important subject — the draft convention for the suppression of acts of nuclear terrorism — was not concluded. Most provisions of the draft enjoy general support, but others require additional negotiations. We hope that they will be concluded successfully next year.

This was a year of important celebrations. The fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was the occasion for the adoption of two important resolutions: that on the human rights defenders, to which I referred earlier, and that reaffirming the

General Assembly's solemn commitment to implementing the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations and as a source of inspiration. The General Assembly also celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of peacekeeping operations, which offered us the opportunity to reaffirm that the United Nations continues and should continue to be a fundamental pillar of the maintenance of international peace and security throughout the world.

In conclusion — and I apologize for perhaps having spoken too long — I wish to return to my initial point. I believe that this has been a fruitful session, for which all members may take credit. I wish particularly to thank the Vice-Presidents, who took my place on many occasions, and the Chairmen, Vice-Chairmen and Rapporteurs of the Committees, who also did excellent work. Of course, we could not have achieved the positive results I have summarized without the invaluable and constant support and professionalism of the staff of the Secretariat and the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services. I wish in particular to mention the interpreters and translators, who have had to struggle with my Spanish, and the Meetings Coverage Section of the Department of Public Information. To all these, and those whom I have not mentioned, I offer my deep gratitude and that of my team.

I wish very happy holidays to all and a year full of professional and personal success in 1999. I will return in February, when we shall resume our work with the same determination which we have shown to date.

Programme of work

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I should now like to make an announcement in connection with sub-item (b) of agenda item 91, entitled "Financing of development, including net transfer of resources between developing and developed countries".

Members will recall that at its 91st plenary meeting, on 15 December 1998, the General Assembly adopted resolution 53/173 under that sub-item. Paragraph 4 of resolution 53/173 requests the President of the General Assembly, in close consultations with Member States, to designate two vice-chairpersons for the ad hoc working group established under resolution 52/179, preferably before the convening of its organizational meeting in January 1999.

In this connection, I should like to announce that the first organizational meeting of the ad hoc working group will take place immediately after the adjournment of this plenary meeting, here in the General Assembly Hall.

I should also like to make an announcement concerning agenda item 31, entitled "Culture of peace". I have been informed by the Permanent Representative of Bangladesh that more time is needed for consultations on a draft resolution under this agenda item. It is envisaged that further consultations will be held early next year and that they will again be coordinated by the Permanent Representative of Bangladesh.

The meeting rose at 4.10 p.m.